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SIPDIS

STATE FOR L/LEI AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2018
TAGS: CJAN PREL KJUS KCRM MO
SUBJECT: MOROCCO: MOJ READY TO SET DATE FOR MLAT
NEGOTIATIONS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Robert P. Jackson for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Secretary General Mohammed Lididi said that discussions leading toward a renegotiation of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) currently in force between the Government of Morocco (GOM) and the USG are a "high priority" for his ministry. Although Moroccan legal experts are unable to travel to the United States in September to begin talks as originally planned, Lididi proposed a visit by U.S. DOJ and State Department counterparts to Morocco in late September, or a trip to the U.S. by Moroccan MOJ officials during the second or third week in November. He put forth four "key areas" around which the GOM was interested in building the negotiations. Lididi's support bodes well for the MLAT prospects. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Moroccan treaty experts will not be able to travel to the United States in September to discuss the renegotiation of the MLAT currently in force between the GOM and USG, MOJ Secretary General Mohammed Lididi (Deputy Secretary equivalent) told LEGATT and PolOff on August 27. He reiterated, however, his strong commitment to starting the process despite the initial delay, and said it was a "high priority" for his ministry and the GOM. He proposed a visit by U.S. DOJ and State Department counterparts to Morocco in late September, or a trip to the U.S. by Moroccan MOJ officials during the second or third week in November.

¶3. (C) Lididi said that the types and levels of legal cooperation between Morocco and the United States needed to be formalized through a series of comprehensive accords between the two governments. He emphasized that the GOM was not asking for exceptional treatment, simply the same type of updated formal recognition of legal procedures it has with Spain, Canada, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and others.

¶4. (C) Lididi identified four "key areas" of interest for the GOM:
a) Criminal and "penal" issues related to extraditions and prisoner exchanges (including death penalty clauses);
b) Migration issues related to status and deportation of illegal or clandestine migrants;
c) Family issues related to custody and child abduction cases;
d) "Full faith and credit" issues related to reciprocal recognition of legal credentials for lawyers and medical professionals, validity of marriages, and sworn statements and certified documents, among others.

¶5. (C) Lididi recommended an exchange with the USG, prior to whatever date is agreed upon for initial talks, with Morocco providing examples of agreements the GOM has with countries like Canada and the U.S. providing examples of similar treaties with similarly situated Arab countries.

¶6. (C) Comment: The senior civil servant in the Ministry of Justice, Lididi effectively runs the Ministry and, with a minimally engaged political Minister, tends to set its internal policies. He is known for his strong organizational skills, decisive manner and short meetings (a rarity in the Moroccan bureaucracy). The incumbent Minister of Justice has no legal background and information received from NGOs working on judicial reform, and even from other MOJ officials, seems to indicate that the Minister leans heavily on Lididi for advice, expertise, and direction, while major policies tend to be set by the Palace. If Lididi is invested in the MLAT discussion process, it will likely move forward quickly and decisively. End Comment.

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Jackson